



FOCUS ON.... U.S. MIDTERM ELECTIONS

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On Tuesday November 7, 2006, Americans will go to the polls to vote for members of Congress, state governors, and many state-level positions including various state referendums. It is not a presidential election year, therefore it is referred to as a "midterm" election.

2006 Midterm Elections



Ronnie Terrell looks over one of the new voting machines used in Warren County while voting Tuesday, June 6. (© AP/WWP)

Every two years Americans elect members of the House of Representatives to two-year terms and about one-third of their Senators, who serve six-year terms. The House of Representatives and the Senate make up the U.S. Congress. Presidents are elected to four-year terms. The elections in which Americans vote for their congressional representatives but not for president are known as midterm elections, which this year will be on November 7, 2006. Thirty-six states will also vote for their governors this year. The next presidential election will be in November 2008.

Currently the Republicans hold a small majority of seats in both houses of Congress. Because Congress has the power to pass laws and determine how funds are spent, the outcome of the midterm elections could greatly impact U.S. politics and law.

Source: <http://usinfo.state.gov/dhr/democracy/elections.html>

The Current Congress (109th) – party affiliations

House of Representatives	
Republicans:	232
Democrats:	202
Independents:	1
Vacant Seats:	0
Total:	435

Senate	
Republicans:	55
Democrats:	44
Independents:	1
Vacant Seats:	0
Total:	100

Note: The Republican Party is associated with the color red, and the Democratic Party is associated with the color blue. For example, a "red state" is one that tends to vote Republican, and a "blue state" tends to vote Democratic.

Congressional Candidates

"Party Standings: There are 33 Senate races this year, with Democrats defending 18 seats and Republicans defending 15. [Democrats need to win at least 6 seats in the Senate to gain the majority.] All 435 U.S. House seats are up for election. Democrats need to pick up 15 seats to take control of the House."

Source: Washingtonpost.com – Campaign 2006

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/interactives/campaign06/congress.html>

For more information about the candidates, as well as the two main political parties, see:

Project Vote Smart

<http://www.vote-smart.org/index.htm>

Provides in-depth information on all the candidates, including issue positions and voting records.

Open Secrets

<http://www.opensecrets.org/index.asp>

"Your guide to the money in U.S. politics" – provides specific information about funding for each candidate. (Center for Responsive Politics)

Congresspedia

<http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Congresspedia>

"....the "citizen's encyclopedia on Congress" that anyone—including you—can edit.... Congresspedia is a not-for-profit, collaborative project of the Center for Media and Democracy and the Sunlight Foundation..."

Democratic Party official homepage

<http://www.dnc.org/>

Republican Party official homepage

<http://www.rnc.org/>

(Note: The Republican Party is also called the GOP, for "Grand Old Party")

Governorships

There are 36 governorships up for election in November, with Democrats defending 14 seats and Republicans defending 22. At present, Republicans hold the majority on governorships, with 28 states held by Republican governors, versus 22 held by Democrats.

For more about governor's elections, see:

2006 Governor's Election Guide

<http://www.governing.com/govraces/guide.htm>

"Full coverage of the 36 governor's races up for grabs this November"

Ballot Measures

Along with elections for federal and state representatives, ballots often include a variety of special issues that voters can weigh in on. For more on this, see:

"Initiatives, Referendums Important in 2006 U.S. Elections" By Michelle Austein, Washington File, International Information Programs, U.S. Dept. of State, 09 August 2006.

<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=August&x=20060728124146hmnietua0.3070032>

"More than 100 ballot measures will address wide range of issues...including how their taxes are spent or what rights their state constitutions guarantee....Among the more unusual ballot measures this election year is Arizona's Voter Reward Act initiative, which would give \$1 million to a randomly chosen voter after each election as a way to encourage voter turnout."

Ballotwatch: Fall Ballot Measures 2006, Initiative and Referendum Institute

[http://www.iandrinstitute.org/BW%202006-2%20\(September%20Preview\).pdf](http://www.iandrinstitute.org/BW%202006-2%20(September%20Preview).pdf)

"This report overviews and lists the November ballot propositions.... Of the measures, 78 are initiatives (new laws qualified by petition), four are referendums (proposals to repeal existing laws), one was placed on the ballot by a commission, and the rest are legislative measures.... Hot issues: eminent domain (12 states), gay marriage (9 states), tobacco and smoking (9 measures)." (750KB)

Public Interest in Mid-Term Elections

Mid-term elections do not generally draw as much interest from voters as presidential elections do, but this year could be different. The chart below shows the percentage of voter turnout during the past few elections:

Presidential Elections		Mid-Term Elections	
2004	55.3%	2002	37.0%
2000	51.3%	1998	36.4%
1996	49.1%	1994	38.8%
1992	55.1%	1990	36.5%

Source: Federal Election Commission, via Infoplease.com

American National Election Studies

<http://www.umich.edu/~nes/>

"A collaboration of Stanford University and the University of Michigan....The American National Election Studies (ANES) produces high quality data on voting, public opinion, and political participation to serve the research needs of social scientists, teachers, students, policy makers and journalists who want to better understand the theoretical and empirical foundations of national election outcomes. Central to this mission is the active involvement of the ANES research community in all phases of the project."

More about the election process...

Prior to the general election on the first Tuesday in November, every state holds a primary. The primary process, which varies in each state, narrows the field so that only one candidate from each party will go on the ballot in November. See:

The Green Papers

<http://www.thegreenpapers.com/>

Against bright green background (hence the name), this non-partisan website compiles "facts, figures, tidbits and commentary" on the election campaign process. It provides particularly good information on the election primaries in each state.

"After U.S. Primaries, Focus on November Midterm Elections" By Carolee Walker, Washington File, International Information Programs, U.S. Dept. of State, 13 September 2006

<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=September&x=20060913141121bcreklaw0.6202509>

"Primaries in nine U.S. states and the District of Columbia were held on September 12, helping to complete the slates of Democrats, Republicans and Independents who will face each other in midterm elections on November 7....A Democrat from Minnesota could be first Muslim in Congress."

Q&A: US mid-term elections 2006 (from BBC News)

<http://212.58.240.37/1/hi/world/americas/4734318.stm>

"As the first primaries get under way for the 2006 mid-term elections in the US, the BBC News website answers some key questions about the polls."

News sources:

Campaign Network

<http://www.campaignnetwork.org/>

Content by C-Span (the cable TV network that broadcasts from Congress) and CQ (Congressional Quarterly)

CNN "America Votes 2006"

<http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2006/>

New York Times – Politics page

<http://www.nytimes.com/pages/politics/index.html>

Washington Post – Politics page

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/politics/>

Cook Political Report

<http://www.cookpolitical.com/>

"a non-partisan, online analysis of electoral politics"

Rothenberg Political Report

<http://www.rothenbergpoliticalreport.blogspot.com/>

"a non-partisan analysis of American politics and elections"

Capital Eye

<http://www.capitaleye.org/>

"A money-in-politics newsletter by the Center for Responsive Politics"

Polls in particular....

Real Clear Politics Election 2006

<http://www.realclearpolitics.com/latestpolls/>

Looks at polls for individual races in each state.

Polling Report

<http://pollingreport.com/>

"An independent, nonpartisan resource on trends in American public opinion" this site provides polls not just on candidates, but on how Americans feel about a variety of different issues, from the economy to national security to how they feel Congress is doing in their job, for example, do they "think Congress has accomplished more or less than it usually does" since 2005 (68% say less).

Further Information

"Election Will Turn on Foreign Policy" By Michael Moran, The Star-Ledger (New Jersey), Sunday September 3, 2006.

http://www.cfr.org/publication/11383/election_will_turn_on_foreign_policy.html

"For the first time in the history of midterm American elections, issues with roots beyond America's borders, from the Iraq war to Islamic militancy, from economic nationalism to immigration, will play the decisive role in determining which party wields power in Congress." Michael Moran is the executive editor of the Council on Foreign Relations' website.

"U.S. election likely to affect foreign policy" The Oppenheimer Report, By Andres Oppenheimer, Miami Herald, Posted on Thu, Oct. 12, 2006.

<http://www.miami.com/mld/miamiherald/15736492.htm>

"While the Nov. 7 mid-term election is largely seen as a U.S. domestic affair, an interview this week with New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson -- a likely contender for the Democratic Party's 2008 presidential nomination -- convinced me that the upcoming vote may also have an impact on foreign-policy issues."

"The Race is On: Press Readies Coverage of 'Hot' Mid-Term Elections" By Joe Strupp, Editor & Publisher, August 15, 2006.

[Available upon request](#)

"For anyone who thinks mid-term elections are boring, take a look at the way this year's campaigns are shaping up. "This is potentially the most consequential mid-term election since 1994, and we are approaching it with that in mind," said Richard Stevenson, deputy Washington bureau chief for The New York Times."

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